

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9108
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AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 269

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR PORG
SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH CHIEF OSTATE KOUNTCHE

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH CHIEF OF STATE,
LT. COLONEL SEYNI KOUNTCHE, TO ADVISE OF WASHINGTON APPROVAL
OF 5,000 MT SORGHUM AID FOR NIGER, CONVERSION TURNED TO
HIS OMNIPRESENT CONCERNS: HORN OF AFRICA, WESTERN SAHARA,
NIGER RIVER COMMISSION, AND THE ROLE OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD
IN AFRICA.

2. HORN OF AFRICA: PRESIDENT DISMISSED AS LUDICROUS SOMALIA
CLAIMS THAT ETHIOPIA IS PLANNING INVASION WITH SOVIET/CUBAN
ASSISTANCE. FIRST OF ALL, ETHIOPIA HAS TOO MANY PROBLEMS
DEALING WITH ERITREAN INSURGENCY AND OGADEN WAR. BESIDES
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RUSSIANS AND CUBANS "ARE NOT FOOLS." ON OTHER HAND
PRESIDENT IS CONVINCED THAT RUSSIANS WILL TRY TO PUNISH
SOMALIS FOR OUSTING THEM AND DIVESTING THEM OF THEIR
CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES IN BERBERA "AND OTHER BASES."
HE DID NOT SPECIFY HOW, BEYOND CURRENT ACTIVITY, VENDETTA
WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. HE SAID IT IS NOW NECESSARY FOR SOMALI
PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE TO COOL IT, "DOUCEMENT, DOUCEMENT."

3. PRESIDENT SAID HE DID NOT SUPPORT SOMALI'S INVOLVEMENT IN OGADEN. THIS GAVE RUSSIANS AND CUBANS THEIR OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE IN. HE VIES SITUATION THERE-AS IN MIDDLE EAST-AS EXTREMELY GRAVE AND COMPARABLE TO ANGOLA. HIS WAY (AND FOR HIM ONLY WAY) TO DEFUSE HORN IS FOR UNITED STATES AND U.S.S.R. TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION ABOUT ROLES WHICH EACH WILL PLAY ON BORDERS OF RED SEA.

4. ALTHOUGH KOUNTCHE HABITUALLY DISCLAIMS ANY ANIMOSITY TOWARDS SOVIETS, HE HABITUALLY CONDEMNS, AS HE DID IN THIS MEETING, SOVIET POLICY OF MILITARY AID WITHOUT DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE IN AFRICA. "BESIDES, YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR IT; IT IS NOT A GIFT."

5. NIGER RIVER COMMISSION WAS FOCUS OF KOUNTCHES INFORMAL MEETING IN BAMAKO LAST WEEK WITH TRAORE. THE LABEZANGA DAM OF MALI AND KANDADJI DAM OF NIGER PLUS THE ULTIMATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RIVER BASIN REQUIRE EXCLUSION FROM THE COMMISSION OF THOSE COUNTRIES WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST IN THE BASIN SUCH AS COAMEROUN, CHAD AND IVORY COAST. OTHER WISE, COMMISSION WILL REMAIN IMPOTENT. KOUNTCHE SAID THAT OBASANJO OF NIGERIA, WHO SHARES THIS VIEW, PLANS TO HOST A SUMMIT MEETING OF INTERESTED STATES.

6. WESTERN SAHARA REMAINS INSOLUBLE "EVEN WITHOUT OULD
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DADDAH." KOUNTCHE VIEWS THE CRUX OF PROBLEM TO BE ALGERIAN FEAR OF MOROCCAN PROXIMITY. "SIMPLY A QUESTION OF SECURITY."

7. FINALLY, TO ATTEMPT TO DRAW HIM OUT OF CEAO PACT, I ALLUDED TO REPORTS OF ALGERIAN THREATS AGAINST NIGER PARTICIPATION. HE HAVE A QUICK "YES" WITHOUT DISCUSSION AND THEN OFFERED HIS OWN RATIONALE FOR NON-INVOLVEMENT IN SUCH PACTS. FRANCE IS, OF COURSE, NEXUS OF THIS MILITARY GROUPING OF AFRICAN NATIONS. THERE COULD BE A PROLIFERATION OF SUCH AFRICAN GROUPINGS AROUND THE UNITED STATES, U.S.S.R., CHINA, WITH INCREASED EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPMENT OF MILITARY CAPACITY OF THESE SMALL COUNTRIES AND CORRESPONDINGLY DIMINISHING THEIR CAPABILITY TO DEAL WITH REAL PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. GREAT POWERS SHOULD HELP AFRICAN NATIONS TO DEVELOP ECONOMICALLY RATHER THAN DISTORT THAT DEVELOPMENT BY ENCOURAGING MILITARY GROWTH.

8. COMMENT: AS USUAL CHIEF OF STATE WAS GRACIOUS WITH HIS TIME AND GENEROUS WITH HIS INSIGHTS. HE WAS RELAXED THROGH VERY SERIOUS IN HIS EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN ABOUT AFRICAN PROBLEMS. HE GIVES IMPRESSION OF A LEADER

WHO FEELS THAT HE HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINDING THE
SOLUTIONS TO ALL AFRICAN PROBLEMS AND FOR PLOTTING SAFE
PASSAGE FOR HIS PEOPLE. HE FEELS HIS FIRST RESPONSIBILITY
IS TO NIGER BUT HIS INTERNATIONAL - PRIMARILY REGIONAL-
INVOLVEMENT EVIDENCES HIS VIEW OF NIGER AS A PART OF WHOLE
CLOTH OF AFRICA. THIS IMAGE IS PROJECTED FROM SUBSTANCE
OF KOUNTCHES WORDS AND ACTIONS WHICH PIERCE THE VEIL OF
HIS PERSONAL MODESTY. JAMES

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